



**TOWN OF GRAFTON**  
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**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION  
COMMITTEE**

## **Meeting Minutes**

July 28, 2016

A meeting of the Community Preservation Committee was held on Thursday, July 28, 2016 in Conference Room A of the Grafton Memorial Municipal Center.

Present: Vice Chair Jennifer Thomas, David Robbins, Jim Gallagher, Gina Dalan, Ken Holberger (7:30 p.m.) and Ann Morgan. Also present: Doug Willardson, Assistant Town Administrator

Absent: Chairman John Stephens, Clerk Paul Scarlett and Member Peter Finn.

I. Vice Chairwoman Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Ms. Morgan agreed to take meeting notes as the Clerk was not in attendance. Ms. Thomas welcomed David Robbins as the newest CPC member. Mr. Robbins is the newly appointed Planning Board representative replacing Mr. Hanna.

II. **Clerk's Report** – Passed over.

### **IV. Project Updates**

- A. Town House / One Grafton Common – No update; project representative was absent.
- B. Historical Society Textiles & Shoe Conservation – no report; the project is ongoing.
- C. Town Clerk – Historic Records Preservation Project – no report; project is ongoing.
- D. Super Park – Ms. Thomas provided a project update. The project is still in the permitting phase. The Super Park Committee is reevaluating the project in light of the recent cost estimates that were higher than expected. She's hoping for more project information to be made available to the Super Park Committee by the end of the month.
- E. Stone Arch Bridge – Mr. Gallagher noted that the Applicant is working on the final project plans.
- F. Silver Lake Project – It was noted that the Applicant now has access to the approved funds and that the project should move forward.
- G. Nipmuc Long House – Ms. Thomas noted that there was no new information about the next steps for this project.

### **V. New Business**

- A. Committee Membership Roster – Town Clerk: Ms. Thomas noted that the form need to be updated and submitted to the Town Clerk. Ms. Morgan agreed to prepare and submit the form. There were no objections.

B. Fall Town meeting Project Applications

- i. Grafton Common Improvements – Ms. Thomas noted that Mr. Stephens asked that this item be placed on the agenda for the purposes of informing the Committee that an Application is likely to be submitted. The scope of the project is expected to include redesigned pedestrian ways, reconfigured parking, and fencing.
- ii. Wheeler Road Property – Assistant Town Administrator Doug Willardson was present to discuss this item. Ms. Thomas noted that the Committee was being asked to discuss options regarding the potential purchase of a portion of the property located at 27 Wheeler Road as part of negotiations with a local developer, Peter Adams, to rethink a proposed 40B housing development. Ms. Thomas reviewed the project particulars including the number of proposed units (36 market rate, 9 affordable), infrastructure considerations including a 1,550 dead end road with a cul de sac as well as public comment received to date. Project information and all public comment can be found on the Town's website. Mr. Robbins provided an overview of the development process of a 40B project which is reviewed by the Zoning Board of Appeals vs. a traditional subdivision process which is reviewed by the Planning Board. Ms. Thomas noted that the CPC is being asked to explore the possibility of purchasing to preserve the back meadow of the project site.

Mr. Willardson presented a number of development and profit scenarios that would enable the developer to produce housing if the back meadow was no longer a factor in the build out. He noted that developer is amenable to negotiations with the Town but that he had not directly approached the Town to discuss this with CPC. He noted that his office had put together the presented scenarios as a result of the outpouring of public comment seeking to preserve the site in light of its proximity to extensive open space and recreation land. It was noted that the developer would move forward with building houses on the front portion of the site (nearest to Wheeler Road) and that the CPC was being asked to consider the back meadow (currently an open field used for growing hay for sale) which is not visible from Wheeler Road. Mr. Willardson noted that the developer is asking \$1,800,000 for the purchase of the back meadow only.

The Committee discussed the following points:

- The developers projected profit vs. the assessed value of the land. Ms. Thomas raised concerns about the asking price for the property against the assessed value. It was noted that the developer would expect to receive the asking price and would not likely negotiate a price closer to the assessed value.
- The intrinsic value of the land in relationship to the abutting open space and recreation land. It was noted that, if purchased, the back meadow would eventually revert to woodland as it is unlikely that the Town would expend funds to maintain a field to which there is no practical access. Mr. Holberger noted that there was a hunting contingent that would benefit from this purchase given the amount of wildlife in the area. Trails connecting the abutting Ekblaw Landing property by the Grafton Land Trust would have to be developed and maintained. Access to the field is limited.
- The intrinsic value of the land with regards to protecting wildlife and environmental ecosystems – Ms. Morgan asked if there were any key environmental resources that

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would benefit from preventing the development of the land. Had the Conservation Commission been asked about this site and the value to the various watershed and wetland networks that could benefit from preserving the land? Mr. Willardson stated that he would make inquiries with Town staff and in particular with the Conservation Agent.

- Other Parties – Mr. Holberger, also a member of the Grafton Land Trust (GLT) Board of Directors, was asked if the GLT had considered purchasing or assisting in the purchase of the property. He noted that the GLT was unwilling and unable at this time to do so but could possibly consider contributing a small amount towards the purchase. The GLT decision was based on a number of factors including their long range planning and the fact that the property was not deemed a high priority in light of its location and other properties of higher concern that they are monitoring for potential purchase in the future.
- The use of CPA funds in a prioritized manner – It was noted that the Town will be embarking on an updated Open Space and Recreation Master Plan which will identify potential properties for future purchase based on a number of recreational and open space opportunities. Several members of the Committee stated that it would be prudent to plan for the future with regards to purchasing property that fit the criteria of the CPA. Mr. Robbins noted that there were a number of Chapter 61A properties that must be watched as potential opportunities. The Committee asked if the budget could support a contribution but not the whole amount. It was agreed that there was no interest in an amount that would require a bond. Mr. Holberger reviewed the existing budget noting that the CPC could consider an amount not to exceed \$325,000.

Several Committee members expressed the need for responsible and balanced spending of public funds. Not enough information about the intrinsic value of the land was available to make a responsible decision for the purchase of this property at this time.

**II. Treasurer's Report** – Mr. Holberger reviewed the financial report and answered questions about the bond payments for Pell Farm and One Grafton Common as well as other items. Motion to accept the Treasurer's Report made by Mr. Gallagher, seconded by Ms. Morgan. Motion passed unanimously.

**VI. Executive Session** – None.

**VII. Adjournment** – Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Gallagher, seconded by Mr. Robbins. Motion passed unanimously 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

**Minutes respectfully submitted by Paul A. Scarlett, Clerk**



**EXHIBITS:**

- FY 2016 CPA Funds Summary, dated June 15, 2016; 2 pages.